



NEWS RELEASE

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District Attorney Jackie Lacey Recognizes Acts of Selflessness, Courage

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey today recognized three San Gabriel Valley residents for acts of courage: an Arcadia man who went into a stranger's home and stopped a vicious attack; another who took it upon himself to help find a lost toddler; and a woman who stood up to a murderous gang member.

"I extend my personal gratitude to these heroic bystanders who made the difficult decision to get involved, setting their personal welfare aside, to help victims of crime," District Attorney Lacey said.

The District Attorney's Office presents Courageous Citizen Awards several times a year to ordinary people who have performed extraordinary acts of valor and selflessness in assisting in criminal prosecutions, aiding victims, preventing crimes, or capturing suspects. Today's ceremony marks the first of its kind this year.

The honorees are:

Mitchell Maertens, 30, of Arcadia (Case KA100832)

Mitchell Maertens was driving down a street in Arcadia on Jan. 31, 2013, when an older woman with blood on her hands flagged him down. Mr. Maertens stopped his vehicle and rushed into her home where he saw a younger woman on the ground struggling with her boyfriend.

The defendant had stabbed her and her elderly mother with a knife. The boyfriend also had threatened the young woman's daughter and nephew. Mr. Maertens got on top of the suspect and managed to grab the knife and toss it away. The attacker tried to kick Mr. Maertens, who then punched the suspect twice in the face. Mr. Maertens then helped hold down the man until police arrived.

On June 20, 2013, the defendant pleaded no contest to assault with a deadly weapon, a knife, and causing corporal injury to a co-habitant with a knife and was sentenced to eight years in state prison.

Rowdy Metzger, 43, of Pasadena (Case GAO81441)

On Oct. 17, 2010, a mother reported her 3-year-old child and the child's father missing. Pasadena police realized the father had been arrested for public intoxication the previous night. He did not mention a child and was combative upon arrest. He was so intoxicated that he had left the child in a parked car and walked away. The police asked Pasadena residents to report if they had seen the toddler and the car.

Upon hearing what happened, Rowdy Metzger was so worried that a child was missing in his neighborhood that he decided to help look for the toddler. After police told him where they had searched, he looked elsewhere and ended up finding the car with the child still strapped into the car seat. The toddler had been in that seat and unable to move for approximately 16 hours. Mr. Metzger's diligent search may have saved this child's life.

On February 2011, the father pleaded no contest to one count of felony child abuse and three misdemeanors: resisting arrest, battery upon police or emergency personnel and public intoxication. He was sentenced to five years formal probation, and a one year suspended jail sentence.

Gabriela Ruiz, 30, of Pasadena (Case GAO77852)

On Aug. 29, 2004, Gabriela Ruiz refused to back down from gang intimidation. Ms. Ruiz and her brother threw a party at their Monrovia house. When she heard what she thought were fireworks in the alley behind her house, Ms. Ruiz went outside. What she found instead was a victim fatally shot by a gang member.

Not knowing that the victim was dead, and believing the gang member was about to run him over, Ms. Ruiz and her brother dragged the victim's body out of the way. She soon realized the man had been shot. The defendant began to back out of the alley, and told Ms. Ruiz that she better not call police. Despite being threatened, Ms. Ruiz called 911. She was cooperative with the investigation and, years later, when the suspect was finally found and arrested, she testified in court.

The defendant was convicted of first degree murder in April 2013. He is currently serving a prison sentence of more than 100 years to life.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 73,000 felony defendants and 113,000 misdemeanor defendants.